

Garden writer honored for aiding disadvantaged

By CORINNE ABATT

Alice Wessels Burlingame, who has been writing The Observer & Eccentric's Down to Earth gardening column for some 30 years, seems to pick up awards as readily as flowers from a garden.

Sharing has always been an important word in her vocabulary. Readers often find it in her garden columns. She's widely known for her folksy admonitions — sharing the beauty of a garden, or a bouquet, or a clipping.

Her avowed interest in sharing recently brought Mrs. Burlingame a coveted award from the Garden Writers Association. She was elected a fellow and given a plaque, one of seven handed out in over 30 years.

"One of the reasons for the award," she said modestly, "was probably for my work in founding the profession of horticultural therapy."

This statement barely gives a hint of the extent of her work in this now well accepted profession that a while back, when she began, was a total unknown.

It was natural for Mrs. Burlingame to want to share her interest in gardening with those who had mental or physical problems. She was on solid ground with training in occupational therapy at the University of Michigan, graduate work in communications from Wayne State, a degree in psychiatric social work from the University of Michigan and four years in the school of horticulture and landscape architecture at Michigan State.

BLENDING ALL THIS knowledge, she went to work back in 1951 to establish a horticulture therapy program at Clinton Valley Center.

"I just started with two patients and one volunteer, Mrs. William Hyland," Mrs. Burlingame said. "In those early days we did two things. We made cuttings, and later potted them to give as gifts to families. We also secured flowers from funeral homes and used them for flower arrangements which we placed in tin cans so they couldn't be broken."

The horticultural therapy programs grew steadily and Mrs. Burlingame expanded her efforts to cover almost every area of the handicapped.

Volunteers from local branches of the National Farm and Garden Association jumped into the various volunteer programs at Clinton Valley.

They worked with a variety of patients. Patio and flower gardens were established, two greenhouses were added in 1957, a rose garden for the various wards was planted in 1960 by the Bloomfield branch of the Women's National Farm and Garden Association.

Student training was inaugurated in 1962 and the Foccroft branch gave the first student scholarship for horticultural therapy.

Mrs. Burlingame said, "Seven years ago, Michigan State University began to send horticultural students to live in residence at Clinton Valley Center to work toward accreditation as horticultural therapists."

By this time, Clinton Valley had a fulltime horticultural therapist, Sam Bridges, on the staff, vegetable garden projects and over 100,000 square feet of gardens, in which over half the patients were participating.

While the Clinton Valley horticultural programs

have grown steadily, so has university and national participation. There is now a National Council of Horticultural Therapy in Alexandria, Va.

"MANY COLLEGES ARE GIVING M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s in horticultural therapy," Mrs. Burlingame said. "It has now spread all over the United States, Canada and England, and New Zealand, Australia and Hawaii are making inquiries."

Adding that she has worked with all types of handicapped people, "even the women at Detroit House of Correction," Mrs. Burlingame said, "We are now doing vocational training with the upper grade of mentally impaired at Melwood School in Virginia outside Washington, D. C. The men are being trained in ground maintenance and the women for florist jobs. Many of these people are now working on the grounds of the public buildings in Washington, D.C."

She paused, took a long breath and said smiling, "I'm at my typewriter all the time developing programs. I just had a call recently from the mother of an epileptic son. So now I am asking myself how I can develop a program so an epileptic can go out safely and earn a living? There are also new horticultural therapy programs for hospices for the terminally ill."

While Mrs. Burlingame is one of seven to receive her recent award, another which she prizes is when she was the only person ever to receive a joint citation of honor from the governing boards and presidents of Michigan and Michigan State universities.

She is also an honorary fellow of the American Scandinavian Foundation. She was given the Elizabeth Heywood Wyman award for compassion to her fellow men by Alpha Omicron Pi sorority. The American Horticultural Society gave her a citation of honor during their international congress in Washington and Clinton Valley Center gave her a Pioneer award. There are others.

ESPECIALLY PLEASING to Mrs. Burlingame is that one of the other seven winners of the Garden Writers Association award is a friend who lives in Detroit, Mrs. Myron (Isabelle) Zucker. She was garden writer for the former Detroit Times. As such, Mrs. Zucker along with former Free Press garden writer, Gordon Morrison and former Detroit News garden writer, Ruth Mosher Place, were among those who founded the Garden Writers Association in the late 1940s.

The national group holds one annual meeting a year and the district groups also meet regularly.

Mrs. Burlingame has two children, Dan, a banker and Gail Wiemer of Charlevoix and five grandchildren. Granddaughter, Joan Burlingame, who is completing a degree in hospital management, received training in horticultural therapy under her grandmother. Several others, said Mrs. Burlingame, are showing interest in the subject.

When the busy garden writer and horticulturalist isn't on the road, or in the air, traveling, sometimes for business and occasionally for pleasure, working on horticultural therapy programs, teaching or writing, she may be found working on her Michigan farm.

One thing for certain, she doesn't have much time for just sitting around, nor does what want any.

Violin, guitar blend nicely

By PATRICK J. O'CONNOR

Violinist Misha Rachlevsky and guitarist Chris Birg combined talents last Friday night to present a dynamic Nightcap with Mozart concert at Birmingham Unitarian Church.

Presenting contrasting musical styles, Rachlevsky's colorful stage presence was well complemented by Birg's reflective and subtle approach in this fourth concert in the refreshing nocturnal series. Because of audience response, they will continue during the fall.

The violin-guitar duet opened with a traditionally styled composition, Locatelli's Sinfonia for Violin and Guitar. The adagio revealed the general tone of the piece with a strong, sweeping violin line that spanned a wide range of musical dynamics.

This intricate part was contrasted by a less complicated guitar line which allowed Birg to establish the metric and motivic foundations that Rachlevsky both followed and improved upon throughout the movement.

THE GUITAR WAS GIVEN more room for growth in the allegro. Rich in dynamic shifts, this commanding movement provided the first opportunity of the evening for the duet to exchange the principal solo line freely — an exchange that was precisely executed by Birg and Rachlevsky.

The rest of the sinfonia was subtly effected by the intensity of the second movement. While the guitar line returned to an accompanimental role in the largo, Birg's playing took on a more thoughtful dimension, a result of his fine solo work in the allegro.

The precious ornamentations of the accompanimental part were now gently distinguishable, creating still another new combination with the clear, tender playing of Rachlevsky. The musicians returned to purposeful style in the concluding allegro movement, which again offered superb dynamic contrasts by both performers.

THE CONCEPT OF TWO SOLOISTS was again utilized in Scheider's Sonata in D for Violin and Guitar. The opening allegro, full and challenging, demonstrated disciplined playing by the duet. Two intensely articulate lines combined to produce a strong melodic performance made even better by the sweet embellishments which frequently occurred in the piece.

A tender romance revealed a broader concept to the duet's abilities. The guitar and violin lines were not as intricate in this movement but the dramatic performance of Birg and Rachlevsky maintained the impressively full sound they captured all evening. From this delicate movement, the piece re-

turned to a more energetic tone in the Rondo, where heavy lines requested greater control and balance from both men and were performed flawlessly.

The most outstanding selection of the evening was a cantabile by Paganini. This required a return to the concept of violin soloist with guitar accompaniment.

While this switch in musical style could have easily been a case of the performance to one lead line, both voices shone brightly. Rachlevsky, performing from memory, continued to expand the aural dimensions of his instrument. The entire range of the violin was used in this piece.

His inspired playing gave romantic tone to the piece that bordered on pure passion in the upper range passages. Birg meanwhile gave the piece a gentle glow by his hushed treatment of a rhythmically consistent guitar line.

A curious but somehow appropriate series of pizzicatos added delightfully to the conclusion.

Rachlevsky continued to perform from memory as he and Birg presented two sonatinas also by Paganini. The use of high notes and exact articulation in the slow section of the first sonatina appeared at first to be almost an extension of the cantabile. An intensely quick second section, done with control by both Birg and Rachlevsky, changed that impression.

The second sonatina had a great deal of musical variation.

BIRG'S MANNER OF DISCOVERING the right accompanimental style was showcased in the slow section as he presented variable motivic materials ranging from moderato to legato in nature.

Rachlevsky demonstrated articulatory expertise in the fast section, as he effortlessly produced a close harmonic sequence that called for almost dissonant double stop playing. He climaxed this technical wonderment in a series of solo pizzicato slurs.

It was perhaps as much a degree of curiosity as appreciation that made the audience expect an encore here. Rachlevsky and Birg also performed an encore of the cantabile by the audience's request.

The encores made the evening exceptional. Not only did Birg and Rachlevsky ask the audience what they would like to hear, but they styled flawlessly from the sonatina's zesty format at the end of the concert to the first encore's sentimental mode and then back to the sonatina.

The Trio will perform Friday, Aug. 17, on Aug. 24, soprano Caroline Rogers will join Nightcap veterans Rachlevsky and pianist Felicia Horowitz. An evening of music for violin, cello and harpsichord is scheduled for Aug. 31. Information is available by calling 651-8934.

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